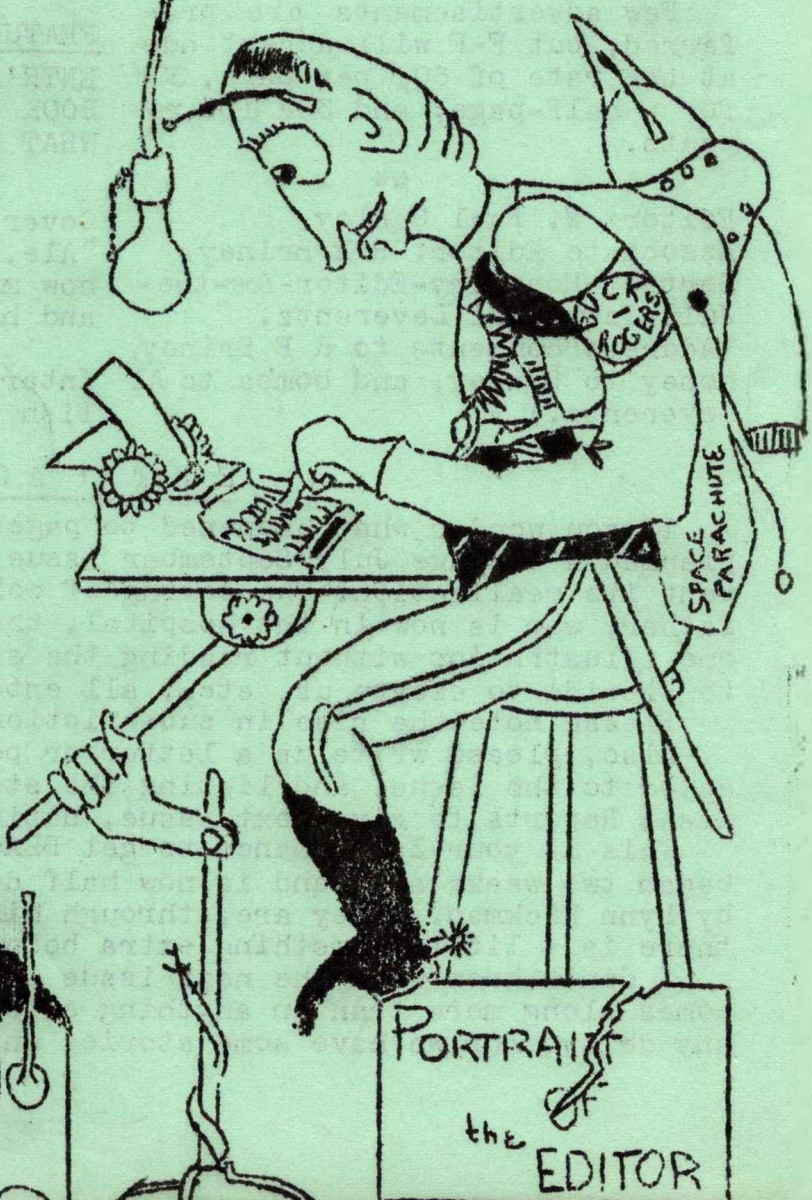
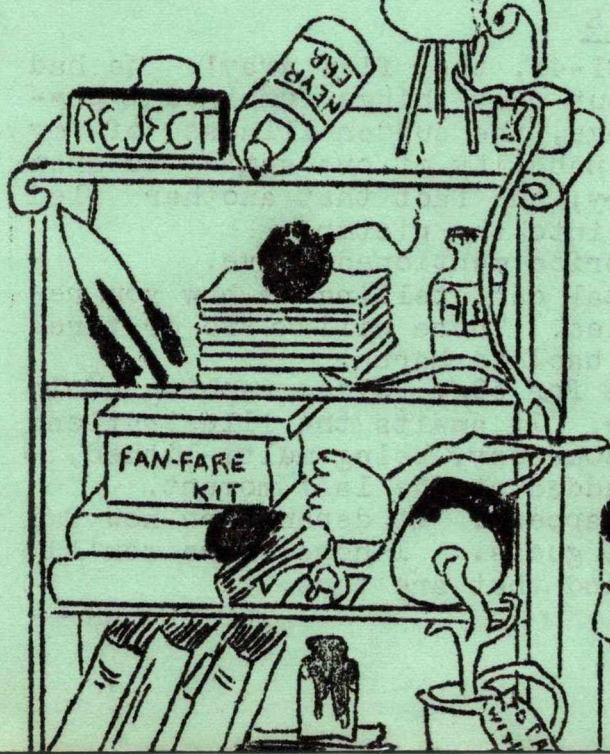


THIS IS A
FAN-FARE
HOME

VOL II, NO IV
FEATURING:
**AL LEVERENTZ
**ALICE BULLOCK
**DAVID ENGLISH
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JULY
1951

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Interior illustrations by David English and W. Max Keasler.

E N T R' A C T E

If you wonder what happened to pages 21-41, they flew away! We had planned a 46 page July/September issue, but many things combined to prevent its realization. The coming of college, the sudden illness of my father, who is now in the hospital, the inability of one artist to draw one illustration without reading the story, the fact that another fled to Florida to escape us, etc., all enter into the picture.

Please note the rise in subscription price mentioned above.

Also, please write us a letter or postal card telling us how you reacted to the issue, and listing the stories. There will be two or three Assay Reports to give next issue, dating back to March.

This is your last chance to get BLAGUE for 50¢. Mimeographing of it began two weeks ago, and is now half done. It awaits the illustrations by Lynn Hickman. They are, through his courtesy, being multi-lithed, so there is a little something extra being added at the last moment.

I don't know when the next issue will appear. It depends on how Dad comes along more than on anything else, I guess. I hope there won't be any delay, for we have some stories on hand that are tops.

Bond, half dressed, pulled himself up into the pilot chamber and stared over Gray's shoulder. "What is it," he asked.

"I'm setting the ship down," said the pilot. "You'd better strap in. We've developed a flutter in the rear, and I don't like the idea of heading out until that's fixed."

"What's below?" asked Bond, scrutinizing the planet toward which they were dropping, but which little rewarded him.

"How in hell should I know? There's a million hunks of rock out here and every one looks exactly the same."

"Just hope we can breathe down there," said Fitzsimmons, the co-pilot, "so we don't have to work suited."

Bond began to lower himself into the lower compartment again.

"Take it easy going in," he advised, "or you're liable to have more than a flutter."

"Are you telling me how to fly this thing?"

*** **

While Gray snapped off the fuel leads and opened the tube vents, Fitzsimmons manipulated the hydraulic skids to bring the ship into a level position. They could see for a considerable distance over the surrounding terrain through the fore-ports. It was of a dull, grey cast, un-vegetated, and singularly uninteresting.

Bond buzzed from below to announce the air breatheable and the pressure not inimical.

"Seems like I picked a good one," said Gray, rising from his seat. "Well, don't sit there, Fitz, we've got work to do." He grunted as he lowered himself through the floor well. "Bond and I'll go out. You can break out a rifle and a respirator, just in case, and follow us. We might as well have a look around while we give the ship a few minutes to cool off."

Below, Bond was already pulling on an electrically heated suit, and instructed the others to do the same. "It'll be a little cool, but not bad at all," he said. He tripped the lock open and stood aside. "after you, my dear captain."

Gray pitched out the link-steel ladder and began the descent around the curvature of the ship's hull. Bond clambered through the lock after him.

The complete barrenness of the land, as far as the eye could see, impressed itself upon the captain as he reached the end of the ladder and lowered himself full length, to hang for a moment, before dropping to the ground. He landed in something that was soft and mushy, and one foot skidden from beneath him, almost causing him to lose his balance.

"Careful, there, captain," called Bond from above. "You're treading upon the gentry, I fear."

Gray kicked convulsively at the strange mass which obscured his feet, repugnance and disgust welling up within him. A noxious odour floated up around him and he struggled free of the slimy material and scrambled to hard rock.

"What was that?" he gasped.

Bond dropped to the ground beside him, swinging out away from the ship's hull in judicial avoidance of the mess which remained where Gray had landed.

"Just what I said," he laughed. "To all appearances, that lovely sponge-like thing into which you stepped is alive, and is probably an-

imal. Certainly. Look there, near the prow! There's another of the things, and it's moving."

The captain looked. Edging along the metal skid of the ship, at an almost painful pace, was a second of the strange creatures. It moved with a sluggish swelling and spreading that was sickening just to watch. It seemed to have no definite form, but was in a constant state of alteration in its locomotion and its adaptation to the ground beneath it. Gray watched in a kind of fearful fascination as it moved slowly closer to them.

"Let's go have a look at it," suggested Bond. "If we wait for it to reach us at that pace we'll be here all day. Come captain, it can hardly be vicious. They only look to be over-grown amoebas."

Gray trailed the first man hesitantly to the spot where the thing heaved itself along repulsively. Bond seemed all fascination. When he reached it, much to Gray's consternation, he prodded it with his toe. All its motion ceased instantly and it lay as inert as the one at the foot of the ship's ladder, blending in with the grey of the rock so as to be almost invisible.

The two of them bent over it, Bond with a smile on his face, and Gray with a somewhat different look.

The animal, for that it certainly was, was merely a great blob of jelly, a blob which would just about fill a five-gallon drum. It was a silver gray in color, with a darker transparent membrane coating it. The membrane left the interior visible, but there was little to see. The grey matter seemed completely homogeneous except for a few spherical irregularities, near the membrane, which looked very much like entrapped bubbles of air, and a single darker sphere-like formation near the core of the plastic body.

"Pretty, isn't it?" asked Bond.

Gray turned away. "You can have the stinking thing!" If it comes nearer, I'll blow it apart with this rifle. Let's get astern and catch that oaf Fitz before he steps into that slob too."

The captain came upon Fitzsimmons near the bottom of the ladder, scraping more of the grey-thing from his boots with the rifle stock, which he in turn scraped off on a handy rock. "Phew," he said. "Smells like a garbage heap! How'd that get there?"

"Crawled there," said the captain.

"Yeah? It's alive? What d'ya know."

"All right, Darwin, if you're through marvelling, let's go back and see what's wrong with the ship."

Bond joined them at the rocket orifice, just as Fitzsimmons was disappearing into the black maw. "Well, captain, it would seem we don't quite have this world to ourselves. The two amoebas we saw have quite a number of friends arriving. At the rate they're showing up, this place should be aswarm with them in an hour or so, even at their modest speed."

"Don't worry about that. We'll be up and off this stinking piece of rock long before that." He stepped to the rear of the ship and called inside the encrusted tube. "Well, Fitz, how's it look?"

A hand-lamp was shoved out of the hole, and the co-pilot's smudged face appeared, following it out into the light.

"I'll tell you, captain. I can't even get back at the nozzles in there. The whole tube is mucked up. When did you have this reamed, last? It's got one hell of a coating. No wonder the ship was kicking up its heels. The whole system could explode with the kind of carry-off we've got in there. We'll have to take turns going in there with

a bar and just start chipping off the gook. That's probably the whole trouble right there."

"We have no choice then," said the captain. "I'll go back aboard and get lights and the necessary tools."

"And masks and oxygen, too," added Fitzsimmons. "It'll be unbreathable with all that stuff floating around in there, and hot as hell."

* * * * *

Fitzsimmons worked at the tube for about two hours, and then hauled himself out. With the captain's help, he crawled back into his heated suit, which had been discarded for comfort and mobility within the tube.

"What happened to Bond?" he asked.

"He's off having another look at those hunks of jelly. They're all over the place now. I even caught one trying to go up the ship's ladder a while ago, the rotten, stinking, slob. I shot it, but the bullet went right through it and I had to knock it off, piece by sticky piece, with the rifle butt. God! How they stink!

"I'll go in now. Bond can take over in a couple of hours. Help me off with this clumsy suit and then go find that idiot and send him back here, if he can stand parting with those rotten things."

At Bond's arrival, the captain crawled out of the tube and sat for a moment on its edge. "Any idea how much light we have left here, or how long a dark spell we're liable to run into?"

"I couldn't say, captain. There's been no perceptible darkening since we've been aground as far as I can notice. I think we can at least assume the length of a full terrestrial day, or more, before us."

"Let's hope so. I don't want to be here in the dark with all those things crawling around. In there, just after Fitz left, I got thinking what it'd be like if one of those crawled into the tube with me in there. Ugh! It makes me shudder all over."

"I never knew you to be such an imaginative man, captain. However, if it makes you feel any better, I suppose I could sit out here and keep watch to see you have no visitors."

"That'd be a good idea. You stay there, and don't go wandering off after one of those things. There's enough of them around now that you can study them from right here, anyway."

And the captain's form once again disappeared into the dark opening.

When it came Bond's turn to work at the tube, he none too eagerly stripped off his heated suit and accepted the chipping tool. The captain loitered about the rear of the ship for a time, lighting a cigarette, and viciously tossing the match toward the nearest of the "slobs."

He finally called in that he was going to look for Fitzsimmons up front, and Bond bade him a rather discouraged farewell.

Inside the tube, Bond perspired profusely, and the mask-breathing and the proximity of the bright crash-light made him not a little giddy. He lowered his arms for a moment, to rest them, and in that silence the captain's voice boomed as if it had issued from a loud-speaker.

"BOND!"

He dropped his tool with a harsh 'clang,' scrambled about in the small space and shoved himself grotesquely toward the mouth of the tube. The captain was white and wild-eyed.

"Bond! Come out here, quick! Something's wrong with Fitz! Those things are all over him, like a blanket!"

Bond scrambled out and sprinted toward the front of the ship, Gray at his side. "In the skid-well!" the captain almost screeched. "God, those things were all over him!"

When they reached Fitzsimmons, most of the grey amoebas had gone. The few that were left the two men struck and pulled off the prostrate form, and Bond lifted the body out of the well and lowered it to the ground.

"Good Lord," he said. "Good Lord."

"Is he dead?" asked the captain, not daring to bend over the man.

"Dead," affirmed Bond, tonelessly, "mercifully enough for him."

"It was those rotten slob!"

"Yes," said Bond, rolling the body over. "The blasted fool must have crawled up in the well and dropped off to sleep and the amoebas found him. They're more dangerous than we thought, Gray. More dangerous than poor Fitz could have imagined. Look at the body."

"I don't want to. I can't!"

Bond smiled grimly. "It doesn't look bad, it just feels so blasted strange. Flabby. Soft."

"God," said the captain, "look at his skull! Look! It's smaller." His voice was soft with horror.

Bond got to his feet. "We can't do anything for him, any more. Poor devil."

"This is enough! We're pulling out, bum tube or no bum tube. This is hell, itself. Hell full of those slimy things, those slimy things that crawl up on you and smother you and...and...God, what do they do?"

"I'm not sure, captain. I'm not sure. But the idea of pulling out doesn't suit me."

"To hell with you, then! If you want to stay, stay! You can have those rotten, murdering things."

"Just a moment, captain." Bond, shivering a little in the cold, reached into his jumper pocket and pulled out a few, rough bits of stone. "What these are," he said, holding them on his spread palm, "I don't know. But I do know they're valuable. Immensely valuable. I noticed, in watching some of the 'slobs,' as you've so aptly named them, crawl along the ship's hull that a number of them left scratches behind them. You know as well as I what those plates are made of, and that nothing less than diamond will touch them. But these pebbles, whatever they are, cut actual gouges into the metal, and with nothing more behind them than the amorphous flabbiness of those amoebas.

"All of which means, my dear captain, that your 'slobs' are inching about with a material imbedded in their outer membrane which is as hard, or harder, than diamond."

The captain forgot his horror of the corpse at their feet for a moment. "Industry would go mad over the stuff, or at least the big diamond concerns would pay plenty to keep it out of circulation. Maybe these slob brought us some good luck after all. Except," he added, "to poor Fitz, here."

"But I'm not staying here with those things. First thing we do when we get back into port will be to organize a group, under our control, to trace down this stuff and ship it out. They can tangle with the grey things."

"An excellent idea, captain, except for one thing. They would be unable to find this place because you would be unable to tell them where to look. We are both inept, to say the least, at astrogation, and where this world may be, in the objective universe, we neither know or are able to determine. Once we leave here, this world, and

its grey horrors, will be completely lost to us. If we want this abrasive, whatever it is, we must take it along with us. We will be unable to take any great quantity, so your dreams of upsetting the system's diamond economy are little more than that, but we should be able to carry away several thousand credits worth of the material."

"What do you suggest we do?"

"Follow these ugly things back to wherever they've come from. I don't think this is their natural stamping ground, since most of them, excepting the two we saw first, started arriving only after we did, and now, although you've probably taken little notice of the fact, their number again seems to be thinning. They're obviously going back. If we don't go now, we'll lose our chance. The things are invisible from the air, so the ship would be of no use, even if we could throttle it down."

"You mean we go on foot?"

"Unless, captain, you can devise a better means."

"Much as I hate those slimy things, it'd be crazy not to at least give this a try. If we don't have to travel too far."

"It can't be too far. We've probably had extraordinary luck in landing where we did. Those things don't move very fast, and they couldn't cover much ground in two or three hours. We should be able to make it in a single hour, and the material is undoubtedly in surface deposits or they wouldn't have picked it up like they did."

The captain nodded. "What'll we do about Fitz?"

"We can't very well bury him in this damned stone, and we don't want to put him in the ship, so I guess he'll have to stay right where he is. He won't mind."

"I suppose not. Well, let's go inside and get the necessary stuff to lug along."

* * * * *

They sealed the ship about a half-hour later. They had kept the heated suits in preference to furs, and now carried shot-guns to replace the more ineffective rifles, makeshift digging tools, and a signal receiver to re-locate the ship in the event they lost their bearings.

Only a few of the grey amoebas remained about. A couple were near the body of Fitzsimmons, but none upon it, all seeming to have lost interest in the strangely sprawled form.

"They all seem to come from and head back in this direction," said Bond, throwing out an arm. "They'll furnish a handy and unmistakable trail for us to follow. Let's go, captain."

They passed many of the grey things, some stationary, some moving in their direction, others in the opposite, but all seeming to keep to a definite path.

The captain was encouraged. "It looks like you were right. They sure seem to be going somewhere. I wonder how intelligent those devils are."

"It's hard to tell, but I think they're smarter than we at first gave them credit for. I have an idea the one you stepped on at the ship summoned the others, somehow."

Gray shuddered. "Sickens me! Things like they are have no right to think, or even come near it."

About three-quarters of an hour after their leaving the ship, Bond used his shot-gun on one of the things.

The act surprised Gray. It seemed unprompted, and he knew Bond rarely did things without very concrete provocation. "What's wrong?" he asked.

"Just avenging poor Fitz, I think. Did you notice how much more rapidly that one was moving than the others? Well, no matter. I'm sure it was one of those who fed on Fitzsimmons. You didn't pay very close attention to what was left of Fitz, but the thing that impressed me about him was the softness of his body, and the shrunken skull, which you called attention to.

"I think I know why the amoebas went after him. They didn't especially want to kill him, I don't think. They probably just smothered him crawling over his face. What they were after, primarily, were his bones."

"His bones?" echoed the captain.

"More precisely, the calcium in them. You probably wouldn't know anything about it, but calcium plays an important part in the life of an organism such as they. It's the thing which accounts for the stiffness and toughness of that outer membrane of theirs. That's why that one was traveling so much faster than the rest. He was one of those that literally sucked the bones right out of Fitz."

Later along their route they came upon more of the more rapidly moving creatures, and each one they destroyed with a kind of vengeful fervor.

The grey things about them began to increase in numbers. It was about an hour and a half after leaving the ship, with the captain grown irritable and rather nervous at the sluggishly moving creatures about them, that they came upon the building.

It lay in a small hollow, and was itself not of any great size. When the captain first saw it, he stopped dead. He grasped Bond's elbow, and just hissed out the words: "A building!"

"I see, I see." It was more than even Bond had foreseen. "This was unexpected. At least no earthmen have beat us here, since that certainly isn't earth-made. It may be just the place we're looking for, since all the amoebas seem to be clustered in that general area."

"You don't plan on going in?" asked Gray as they headed down.

"If there is an 'in,' I certainly do. Unrequited curiosity alone would never let me rest if we by-passed this. You can stay outside if you want."

"I'll go with you. It'll seem good, in a way, to have walls around me again after all this barren rock. Even those walls. But just let one of those slobbs follow us in, and he'll get his!"

The building was in the form of a crude S, and of a greater size than Bond's first estimate. They walked around it, encountering a few of the meandering, senseless amoebas, keeping watch for an entrance of some kind. The walls seemed to be made of closely fitted boulders, extremely closely fitted so that absolutely no chinks were visible. It loomed as if it would easily withstand a siege without any weakening of the massive walls.

"Those slobbs could never lift rocks that size," commented Gray.

"No, they couldn't. I imagine this place predates them by quite a time. Maybe they are descendants of a more solidly built species, a species which would be capable of building a place like this.

"Ah, and here we must have the entrance."

It was a rather crude hole, roughly circular, and opening level with the ground. To one side stood a heavy boulder, obviously once used to block the entrance for some unknown purpose, but now surrounded and imbedded in the gravel-like dust as if it had sat thus, untouched, for eons. Bond tried his shoulder at it, and Gray offered assistance, but even the combined weights could not move it. "That," said Bond, "should allay any fears you might have of the amoebas shutting us in. It would take a lot more jelly than we've seen to budge that thing."

Bond stooped and stepped across the threshold. "Coming?" he asked of his companion.

"I'm coming, but stand aside if we meet one of those slobs in there."

There proved to be nothing inside. The walls were completely solid, and the light grew dimmer as they moved in, rounding the first turn and then the second. Finally, they came to a dead end. Merely a blank wall with a large, semi-square stone against it, and nothing else. Bond seated himself on that, and Gray, with a: "This is a hell of a thing," dropped to a squat and placed the hand-lamp on the floor before him. He lit a cigarette, exhaled, and asked: "What do we do now?"

"We go back out, I guess, and scour the ground in this area to see if we can locate any of that mineral. I had half an idea we might find some in here, but I was mistaken."

"I'll say you were." He watched the smoke rise from his cigarette, and his eye caught sight of a small aperture, perhaps three inches wide, high above them. The smoke, in the draft from the opening behind them was swept through it and out, into the outer light. Bond followed his gaze. "Just a hole," grunted the captain disgustedly, "and a pretty shaggy one at that."

Silence settled for a few moments.

"I think," said Bond, toying with a few splinters of white stone, lying near the base of the outcropping on which he sat, "that all this is suddenly becoming clear to me; the connection of these amoebas with this place."

"Well, enlighten me while I finish my smoke."

"This building is a remnant of an earlier time, obviously. It was built by the same race to which these grey devils belong, but the race was in a higher evolutionary stage. They had a solidity of structure and a strength that their present day relations no longer possess."

"Since this place was built by that elder group of beings, I think the things out there regard it as a kind of shrine. That thought came to me when we first saw this place, and now I'm becoming more convinced that this shrine has a very living God which resides in it."

"Oh? What makes you think that?" The captain's eyes swept the interior.

"Just these." He tossed one of the white rock fragments to Gray, who caught it and looked at it quizzically. "That, captain, unless I am sadly mistaken, is common calcium carbonate. Common, I should say, on earth, but probably very precious here."

"Whatever member of the amoebas lived here was supplied by his fellows with calcium, and I would lay odds that it's not like the rest of these, but a member of the old race, the strong one."

"If I want to be a little free in my guessing, I might even assume this to be the last of the calcium left for it to feed upon, the last of the precious material which kept it from descending the same path its brothers took. The last of the calcium, that is, until we came along. A source of calcium that needn't be searched for and laboriously mined, all by himself, for he is the last strong one. A source of calcium which may mean all the difference in the cosmos to the thing which usually reclines upon the very stone on which I'm now sitting."

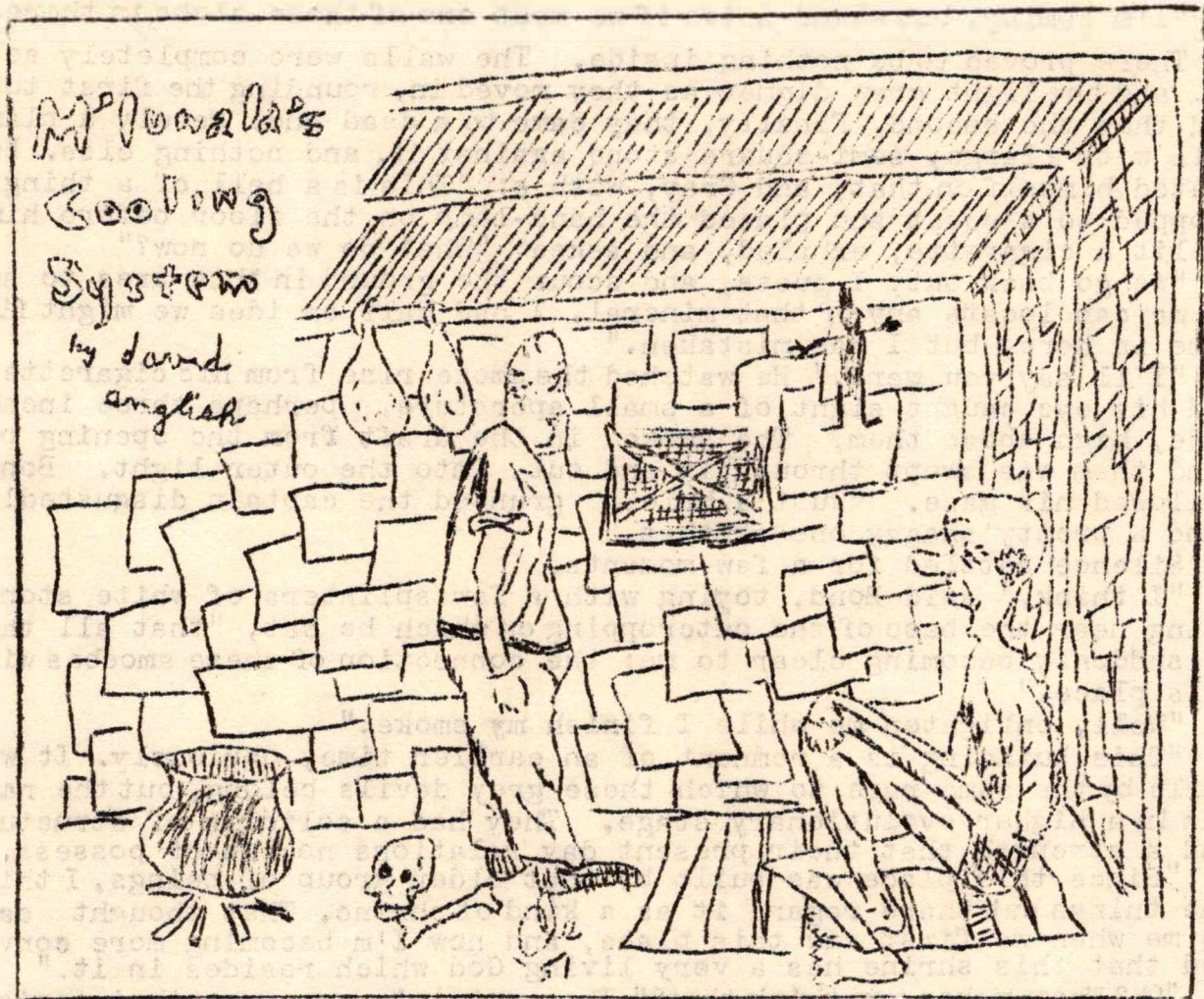
"God," breathed Gray, and, in a moment of rare discernment, "calcium on the hoof. Let's get out of here, if you think one of those old slobs is around, where we can face it in the open."

Bond didn't move. He casually tossed the limestone chip into a far corner where it fell with a hollow, deathly sound. "There's no hurry, Gray."

"Now why?" demanded the captain.

"Notice your cigarette, captain."

Gray snapped his eyes to his hand, searching for something he didn't find. "The smoke," Bond suggested. Gray watched it. It rose from the burning cigarette in a white, milky column, and continued upward in the same manner. A tall, narrow column, frail, yet secure—in the absolutely draftless air of the ancient chamber.



Hector P. Jones, the manager of the Venusian office of Interplanetary Mines, Inc., was angry. He was very angry. It is not recorded just exactly what he was angry at; for it was unknown to everyone, including himself. But that didn't matter; he was angry anyway. As a matter of fact, he was angry at something every moment of the day, and far into the sleepless night. He snapped at Venusian workers. He mumbled surlily at Martian visitors, and they mumbled back at him just as surlily, for they did not fare well in the terrible warmth either. And Terran officials were treated as badly.

As a result, everyone thought—quite happily—he would soon be discharged and sent back to earth. Even he was not too displeased by the prospect, in spite of the good pay he received. He often said he didn't give a damn—which wasn't quite true; his conversation was generously sprinkled with damns, and worse.

He sat in his office, a small, necessarily temporary shack, and cursed the suffocatingly hot weather. The electric fan, though equipped with numerous wild claims by its advertisers, did little more than move the reeking air about. Meanwhile, Venusian workers waddled in, made their troubles known, and were politely dismissed or thrown out bodily according to their value to the company.

Lunchtime arrived, and the complaining flow stopped. Jones' assistant opened a can of beer, and, despite its sickening warmth, actually

proceeded to drink it. Jones scowled.

"What's the matter?" asked the assistant, not really caring.

Jones was silent. Thank heaven he'll be gone soon, he thought. Of all the lousy breaks. I have to put up with this half-wit. And he did, for this was the president of the company's Only Son. He was Coming Up The Hard Way, and doing very well at it. In the two weeks that he had been working, he had progressed from a lowly truck driver to the post of assistant to the manager. And all of this without one bit of help from his father. Every one knew that—he had made sure of it.

"I say, I said: What is the matter?"

"I HEARD YOU TH—er—pardon me, I didn't hear you," said Jones. He had almost shouted at the Boss' Son. That was bad!

The assistant nipped the edge of a sandwich delicately, and said with the bluntness of a Boss' son: "Why are you so crabby?"

Jones, who had just placed a cigar in his mouth, brought his teeth together with a snap. Part of the cigar fell away from his reddening face, the other part was almost swallowed.

His face formed a grotesque parody of a smile, and he asked chokingly, "Who's crabby?" He began to hunt for an ashtray where he could deposit the remains of the cigar.

"You are. You always seem to be shouting at someone. You know, our motto is: 'Be friendly to the worker!'" He smiled benevolently, and said, "Now, what's your trouble?"

"It's the heat," said Jones, trying to be polite to the grinning idiot before him. "I can't sleep nights. Look." He jiggled the puffy skin under his eye.

"Bags, eh?" said the assistant, and immediately began to fancy himself very observant.

"Yeah. And you're right. I am crabby. I'll lose my job if this keeps up. But what can I do?"

"Gosh, I don't know how I could help—Wait a moment. Why don't you try M'luwala?"

"What's that? Some Venusian whiskey?" he asked wearily, sounding not at all like the man who had once been deeply interested in Venusian whiskey.

"No, he's a sort of a witch-doctor, I guess. The Venusians say he can work miracles."

"Huumph!" said Jones. "If he really could work miracles, he could help me but he's just a hoodoo! Bah!"

"I don't know," said the assistant. "There might be a chance."

"Bosh," said Jones, good naturedly. He wished he could kick this superstitious idiot right in the head, but one just does not kick presidents' sons in the head, no matter how superstitious and idiotic they are.

"Very well," said the assistant as he daintily peeled his clothing away from the chair. "I'm going out for some fresh air." He left.

And thus it came about that Hector P. Jones, manager of Interplanetary Mines, Inc.'s Venusian office, and scoffer at 'damn hoodoos,' came to the hut of M'luwala.

** ** *

"How may I serve you?" asked the aged Venusian.

Jones was embarrassed; for he had never asked for a miracle before.

"I—uh—was told you can work miracles," he said at last.

"True," nodded the ancient one. He was very immodest. "I have been endowed with that power by the great god Koorse, and by the Sign of Tonra-Bre, and by..." He recited a list of at least thirty major deities, and Jones, knowing Venusians, dared not cut him short, despite his growing impatience.

"What sort of miracle do you wish?" asked M'luwala after concluding.

"Could you tell me how to keep cool in spite of the terrible heat?"

"Yes," said M'luwala. "I know of a method."

"You do?" gasped Jones. "Tell me about it, quickly!" He had tried to keep from appearing too anxious, but he knew that he had failed. His voice trembled, and even thinking of hoodoo could not prevent him from almost shouting. He knew that that would raise the price at least five dollars.

"That is my secret, but for two—" He looked Jones over. "—forty dollars, I will make it known to you."

He re-examined Jones and considered trying for fifty, but was prevented from doing this by the quick acceptance of his first offer. Jones had accepted it cheerfully for he knew there was no chance of the Venusian going back to twenty again.

The Ancient One nodded, and began to expound his theory:

"On your planet you have a science that claims the brain is responsible for many disorders of the body. True?" Without waiting for an answer, he continued: "I, too, have thought of such a thing. With this in mind, it is natural to assume that if the brain is overheated, so is the body. The thing to do, then, is cool the brain. Eh?"

"Why, yes, certainly," Jones agreed, trying to sound intelligent.

"And I have perfected a method whereby I can cool the brain!" said M'luwala, proudly.

"Not hoodoo?" asked Jones, sceptically.

"Of course not!" snapped the Venusian, angry and offended at the accusation; though he was not sure what he had been accused of.

"Oh, I'm very sorry!" said Jones. He hoped he hadn't angered M'luwala too much. "But let's get on with this cure."

"Very well," said the aged Venusian. "Now, over on that couch."

After Jones had done as he was told, M'luwala brought him a bowl of evil-smelling liquid. "Here, take a sip of this; it will deaden the pain—there will be pain. Just a sip, though. It's quite strong."

Jones took the bowl and drank from it. He thought, Hmm, not as bad as I thought it would be. The bowl was taken from his hands. Sort of salty, he thought, like... He was asleep.

He was very light; he seemed to float on a wonderful, soft cloud, high above the world of pain and hardship. He was safe from everything. Then, suddenly, pain invaded his cloud. He didn't care, though; for every time he tried to focus his mind on it, it disappeared.

After a time that might have been minutes or centuries, he was aware of an odd scraping sound. He was able to hear it only because of its nearness. Anything farther than a foot away was inaudible. Then he felt pain that was worse than anything he had felt before; and yet it didn't really hurt. It felt, oddly, as if his brain were being torn to pieces. Then dreadful warmth engulfed him.

He tried to wonder if something had gone wrong. He tried to be afraid; but he couldn't, for the drug had robbed him of all power to

fear or wonder, temporarily.

Suddenly delightful coolness rolled over him! It began at his head, and tingled along every inch of his body to his toes. It filled him as cold lemonade fills a glass, but the fears that he did not feel weren't relieved by this—that would come later.

Now he was awakening; the light filtered into his eyes, and sounds entered his ears. The first thing he saw was M'luwala, who stood over him with a large, hideously-painted fan. The Venusian peeled his lips away from a row of yellow teeth, and greeted him.

"How did you do it?" gasped Jones, as he rejoiced in the first cool air he had felt since he had left Earth.

M'luwala replied: "I have just put your brain in such a position that it can be cooled by this fan—or any other—and thus cool your body."

"But how?"

The Venusian gave him a fragment of a mirror. "See?" he said.

Jones peered curiously at his reflection. Then he screamed in horror!

Before him was his own face, somewhat spotted with blood; but that was not what shocked and horrified him. It was above—and above was nothing! Nothing but a mass of grey, wrinkled stuff that had, by the removal of the top of his skull, been exposed to the soft breezes of M'luwala's fan.

"My forty dollars?" asked M'luwala, as Hector P. Jones fainted.

The End

NO MORE ROOM
(Japanese Tanku) -by Orma McCormick

Because there was no
More room among the nearby
Instruments, where he
Could set the bottle down, he
Drank all of the alcohol.

The liquor was strong;
He was nearing Rigel Three;
Because there was no
More room in his brain for the
Fumes, he set the spaceship down,

The reason he was
Never heard of again, was
Because there was no
More room on Rigel the Third
For drunken earthlings.

The lowlands are awash with floods of night,
The plains are filled by the swelling sea of shadows
Climbing in liquid silence the mountains of
The East, submerging darkening peaks with rising
Of the thickening tide. The flood-gates are broken
And the country stained with hiss of silent surf.

The fire-glow brightens a moment before it dies
To show the night is leaking through the windows:
The time has come for sleep till morning's sun
Has shown the day to stiffly bowing trees.
Before I go to trample with the wind
On marching multitudes of grass:

I'll drink the dawn from a coffee-cup and watch
The sun-blown shadows hide behind the bed.

—Keran O'Brien

KEVIN'S

CHARACTERS

BY ALICE
BULLOCK



Kevin Zarr was riding on a pink cloud, his foot on the gas pedal of the Transit Company's Cedar Street bus. In his pocket was the letter and check from Escape Magazine. Ted Peters, two doors down the hall at the rooming house, had handed it to him when he got on the bus at Hildrest Avenue. One look at the check had catapulted Kevin right on the soft, squooshy top of that cloud.

Regulation cap pushed back on his head, he sped the big bus past the bus stop and five potential customers. The irate ringing of a passenger carried past his corner transformed itself in his ears to a rolling fanfare of fame. The traffic light at Madison was red, and Kevin majestically rode his bus and elation on to contact a cruising taxi at the exact center of the intersection.

The crash punctured the cloud, dissolving the black headlines announcing "Local Boy Wins Nobel Prize in Literature." Consternation flooded him. The taxi driver was climbing out of his cab, cursing. A red faced, sweating cop tried to straighten out snarled traffic, and Kevin realized he was really in for it this time. A three time loser in traffic court meant curtains for a bus driver.

This is bad he told himself. He was right. He pictured the boss exploding with rage when he had to pay damages on the cab. The picture faded with Driver 331, Kevin Zarr, fired. Which is exactly what happened.

Kevin didn't care. With his first story sold, he'd write more. His flatboat bluchers floated him upstairs to the door of Norma Keene's room at the rooming house that evening. His heart and knuckles beat a stacatto rhythm. Norma, with her chestnut hair and pansy eyes, was Kevin's dish. Juanita Zamora, Norma's room mate, opened the door.

"Oh, it's you!" she groaned in mock dismay.

"Were you expecting St. Spooфин?" Kevin demanded, rushing on "Where's Norma?"

"Hiding in the bathroom until she can come out as the twin with the Toni."

"Norma!" Kevin's voice raised. "Come and look at the budding genius." He waved the precious pink check, his face aglow. Norma, her head an inverted bowl of hors d'oeuvres spiked with bobby pins, came out. "What's cookin'?"

"Me!" Kevin answered, "My story sold, I got fired as a bus driver and I'm going to write all of the time and be famous." He quit waving the check and both girls looked at it with the same awe they might have granted a three headed calf. Doubting their eyesight, seeking reassurance of their senses, a ckeck for ninety dollars for twenty three typewritten pages, double spaced at that. Norma had typed Kevin's untidy copy. Her boss at the Light and Power Company never paid any attention to what she typed as long as her fingers were flying.

"Kevin! I can't believe it. Isn't it wonderful? When will it be printed?" Norma's eyes were dewy. "You didn't mean that about being fired of course. It will be nice to have extra money for your savings account though. You can do stories weekends and I'll help you."

"Norma, I was fired, and I did mean that I'm going to write all the time. This check is twice what I get for a week's work on the bus, and I can do more stories." Kevin looked at Norma with more hope than trust. Norma was a practical soul.

"But you can't depend on writing, Kevin. A home has to have an established, sure income." She glanced at the tiny diamond on her left hand, then looked at Juanita. "Call Ted, Juanita, and let's celebrate with a Mexican dinner at El Plato."

Kevin and Norma had their first real quarrel that night. "They wouldn't give me my job back even if I asked for it," Kevin protested, "And I don't want it. You said I was wasting time on this story, but it sold. I want to write."

"You can write and work too," Norma reiterated, "I'm not asking you to quit writing, only have some sense. We can't get married on one check."

"You wait, I'll show you," Kevin promised. He stocked up with paper, carbon paper, pencils, envelopes, stamps and a portable typewriter, one third down, balance in monthly payments, with Norma a reluctant consulting expert during her lunch hour the next day. He was frightened and optimistic in one. The portable slid back only to be jerked forward all afternoon, while the tiny wastebasket filled, overflowed and disappeared under discards.

"It's not as easy as the first one," he admitted ruefully a week later. "But I got a yarn in the mail today." The four, Kevin and Ted,

Norma and Juanita, were again at inexpensive El Plato, and Kevin now carried a little notebook to jot down ideas.

Months later, his manuscripts were steadily revolving. "We are very sorry," Escape Magazine finally wrote, "but your stories do not meet our needs at the present time. Your characterization seems weak."

Kevin now watched for the mailman with tense anxiety. His savings were non-existent. The big manila envelopes, addressed in his own script, were homing pigeons bearing little notes. "Characters pushed around." "Plot good, characters stilted." Kevin was too new at free lance writing to know that rating notes was encouraging.

He avoided friends now, even Norma, and she made it easy for him. He couldn't participate in El Plato dinners, and the feeling of guilt that grew as he met friendly inquisition "Sold anything?" Why didn't they let him alone. He wanted to sell he thought morosely, and hurried back into the hall to avoid Norma, whom he had spotted coming up the street. Light-dilated eyes failed to see Professor Horne, who lived in the smallest room at the back of the house, until he bumped into him.

There was nothing unusual about not seeing Prof. Horne. They all knew the little, gray-brown, hickory nut of a man, meticulously dressed, stingy of words, who never smiled except with his eyes. They all knew him but seldom saw him. Now, having knocked the breath out of him, Kevin said "I'm sorry, Professor, I didn't see you."

"Obviously," Horne replied, looking at Kevin, then Kevin remembered. The landlady had said Prof. Horne was a psychologist writing a thesis. "I really am sorry, sir," Kevin raced on, "Our landlady said you were writing a thesis. I write too—" he mumbled the last sentence.

"Write what?" Horne settled thick spectacles on his nose.

"Fiction," Kevin suddenly found it necessary to talk to this man who dealt in words. "I've only sold one yarn though. I'd like—that is, if you're not busy--?"

Horne's eyes seemed enormously large and sad behind the heavy glasses.

"In half an hour. My room." Horne's words were less clipped now. He moved on down the hall and out the door. Kevin stood still, thinking, when Norma entered. He had forgotten her.

"Any news, Kevin?" she asked.

"No," he answered.

"Come with us for waffles tonight and get the cobwebs out of your attic," Norma said with a pleading note in her voice, "We never see you any more."

"Can't tonight," Kevin's boyish bantering had slowly withered in the last months, "Gotta date."

"Oh! I see—Excuse me!" Norma snapped, flouncing around. Kevin caught her arm.

"Wait, Norma," he begged, "Not a date with a girl. I'm going to talk to Prof. Horne tonight."

"Oh no! Not him, Kevin," Norma answered quickly, then clapped a hand to her mouth.

"Why not? What have you got against him?"

"Kevin, I don't know. He gives me the creeps," Norma answered, "He's a queer character."

"Me too," Kevin's voice was bitter, "I try to write too."

"I told you you couldn't make a living writing Kevin," Norma said slowly, "And I'm getting tired waiting for you to realize it. If you

don't snap out of this pretty soon, you can have your ring back."

She was interrupted by the entrance of a tall man who inquired "Where can I find Kevin Zarr?"

"That's me," Kevin answered, "What can I do for you?"

"See you later—I hope!" Norma said, running quickly up the stair.

"I'm from the Duke Typewriter Shop and I'm sorry, but I'll have to pick up the portable, Mr. Zarr. You haven't made a payment in months, and..."

"I know," Kevin replied, his shoulders slumping, "I just miscalculated my income I guess. It's in here. I'll get it for you."

Too late now to talk to Horne, Kevin thought as the man left with the machine. But I'll go tell him that even if he knew the magic word and could tell me, I'm through trying to write. No characters.

Kevin washed his face, combed his hair, squared his shoulders and walked down the hall to the smallest room.

"Come" Horne's voice called before Kevin's raised knuckles touched the door. Kevin looked down the hall involuntarily to see if anyone else was in sight. It was deserted, so he turned the door knob and pushed the door open.

Horne sat in front of a tiny, cheerful fireplace, his back to the window. That window looked indescribably different from the rest of the windows in the house. Kevin shook off an uneasy feeling as he closed the door.

"There's not much use bothering you I guess," he told Horne, "I thought maybe you could help me a little, but they've just repossessed my typewriter. I guess it's no use trying to keep on."

"Character trouble," Horne's voice was less a question than a statement.

"Yes. How did you know?" Kevin asked.

"Usually is. Character, plot or both." Horne waved his hand. "Sit down." Kevin sat.

"Do you think you want to write or do you have to write?" Horne questioned sharply. The room seemed humidly hot, and Kevin felt dizzy. He ran a finger around his collar, remembering he hadn't eaten since the morning doughnut and coffee. It made him a little angry that Horne's voice seemed critical.

"I don't have to do anything," Kevin struggled with lassitude, "If I didn't want to write I wouldn't."

Horne's head wobbled in the waves of heat and nausea that eddied in Kevin's body. Anger and humiliating weakness fought. His fingers dug into the arms of the chair and his eyes wandered. There at a desk, unnoticed until now, was a queer old typewriter, with a roll of paper like an adding machine.

"I can write!" he reassured himself to Horne, "I'll show you. I'll not make up characters as I have been doing. I'll put the people in this house down on paper." It made no difference to Kevin that Horne had not answered him. He knew Horne was judging. He struggled in a sort of nightmare world where words strangled in a stricken throat. The typewriter was there. His body was no longer his own, but an automaton that seated itself before the machine, fingers poised over the keys.

A girl. There was always a girl character in every story. He thought of Horne, her chestnut hair. His fingers began to tap. The typewriter felt odd. Crazy off brand—it writes pictures instead of words. It's insane. I'm insane. But I'll show him! "Character." The

word was a command, coming from nowhere, everywhere. Norma's hair curling around her shoulders, with the little cowlick at the crown of her head. Eyes. Norma had lovely violet eyes, but he would use Juanita's limpid brown ones, they were more believable. Tap. Tap. His fingers moved and the giddy whirling in his head increased. He could see in that window of Horne's, the character taking shape, the hair and eyes. The sure stroke of the keys became more rapid. This was painting a picture with little keys instead of brushes and oils. Might as well use the cute librarian's legs. They shaped up on the window screen and stopped at the knees as he began to describe the hands that went with the feet and legs. Everything was clouded by a mist now, but the screen—window—and the character emerging.

In the city library a woman's voice raised in a high scream of terror. Edith Hyde, librarian, sorting file cards sank to the floor as her knees gave way. She reached out to save herself and her hands dissolved into nothingness. Pure nightmare panic charged her vocal cords. She tried to cover her eyes with fuzzy arm stubs, writhing in torment on the tile floor.

"What's the matter?" voices surged and an elderly woman quietly fainted at the sight of the legless, handless girl twisting on the floor. A young girl peeked nervously back of the desk and turned green, stumbling toward the rest room.

"Call a doctor. Get an ambulance, quick!" an Army officer ordered crisply, trying to pin down the flailing, bloodless stumps of wrists while the chilling screams took on the hysterical laughter of the demented.

Upstairs at the rooming house Norma stopped out of her shower and unstrapped the chin strap of her bathing cap. It seemed loose as she pulled it off. She tossed her head—and the weight of her hair wasn't there. Dropping the rubber cap her hands went to her head, and it was bare, slick. The slim hands felt no curls. Her eyes sought the steamed mirror and unbelievably saw a pate as bare and pink as a toy balloon. "Juanita!" her voice was a shocked whisper and then a strangled sob, "Juanita..." Water running down her long, lithe legs, Norma burst through the bathroom door. Juanita sat stupidly on the side of the bed. A silver mist was bandaged across her eyes and Juanita's hands clawed. "I can't see! Oh God! Norma help me—I can't see." Panic welled up and her red lacquered finger nails tore at her face, leaving bright streaks of blood down her cheeks.

Kevin's fingers tapped, and his eyes watched the disjointed figure mirrored in the window.

"Appearances aren't people," he grunted, vaguely conscious that Horne sat unmoving. "How they look is only window dressing. How they feel is character."

"You're learning," Horne said, his voice coming from long distance with a poor connection. Kevin tore the paper from the machine and tossed the crumpled ball into the fireplace, where it flared, curled and blackened, and burned out. He turned back to the typewriter and began to write his own hopes, fears, ambitions, even his love for Norma. A clear, blue white flame began to reflect in the window.

An ambulance siren moaned into silence at the public library. The

Army officer wiped sweat from his forehead and muttered, "This girl fainted I guess," to the white-suited doctor.

"For Chrissakes! You call an ambulance because a woman faints?" the tired doctor ranted. Kneeling beside Edith, he lifted her limp hand and put a sure finger on the pulse.

"Her hands—they're there," the Army officer stuttered shakily, "She's got legs."

"Are you drunk?" the doctor snapped, "Of course they're there. What the devil is the matter. Haven't you ever seen anyone faint before?" The stretcher bearers moved close. The Army officer staggered slightly as he made his way through the knot of curious to the door. "No, I'm not drunk now, but in half an hour I will be!" he said.

Edith roused as they placed her on the stretcher and began to scream "My hands! My feet!"

"Psychopathic," diagnosed the man in white, and pushed the plunger of a hypodermic needle. "Hospital for observation."

In the rooming house Norma pushed her hair back and soothed the hysterical Juanita. "There honey," she said softly, "You had a bad dream. Let me wash the blood off your face." Her hands shook, and she lifted them to her hair, testing to be sure it was there.

"Must be gas in the room or something. I thought I was bald headed." She shivered as the curtain flapped in the breeze from the newly opened window. "We can't tell anyone, they'd think we're crazy," Norma blew her nose noisily, "Maybe we are." Juanita sobbed softly.

Kevin's fingers tapped, and the reflected flame took on amber and rose, then ruby red, pulsing and clear.

"You have written your heart out," Horne's voice, faint and sad, broke the rhythm. "No man writes with his blood that was not meant to write."

"I know," Kevin's face was curiously old. He looked at the little man still quietly relaxed in the chair with his back to the window. He asked, "Who are you, Professor Horne?"

"Men have named me in many tongues, I am I. Does it matter, Kevin?"

"No. No, it doesn't matter."

"We must go now," Horne said gently, rising with outstretched hand. Kevin looked back at the typewriter, only now it wasn't there. The window was just a window. He took Horne's hand as he used to take his mother's hand when just a little boy. They walked out through the hall, and into the dusk. Street lamps were flashing on, the night air was sweet and clean.

"There it is, Kevin," Horne's pointing finger swung in an arc embracing the city, the mountains beyond, the plane circling the airfield with landing lights blinking. Stars were just beginning to show, misty and faint.

"The sword is two-edged, Kevin," Horne's voice was fading, "You can maim and hurt, or you can bring light and warmth." Kevin turned tired grey eyes to look at his companion. Somehow while he had watched the night sky, Horne had left him. He felt in his pocket for his pencil and notebook, and turned slowly toward the spurting traffic of the city.

He had to eat—and he had to write.

The End

GET "BLAGE," by Al Leverentz & Toby Duane, now, even if in my great enthusiasm I did misspell it. (BLAGUE) 50¢ now. After Nov. 1, 65¢.

JUST BROWSING AROUND

THE INCOMPLETE ENCHANTER, by L. Sprague deCamp & Fletcher Pratt (Prime Press, 1950; \$2.50). The first adventures of Harold Shea, in which he journeys to the land of Scandanavian mythology. This is a world in which men and Gods have joined together to battle the Giant races. He forms an intricate part of the goings-on, finally being returned to to his own universe by an old witch at the gates of Hell. Once back in his own universe, he is convinced by his superior, Dr. Reed Chalmers, that they should explore the land of Spenser's "Faerie Queen." At a showdown in a battle between magicians, Shea is trapped with a 'Nature Girl' that he has found in a maze beneath an enchanter's castle, escapes back to his own world with the girl, and marries her, presumably to settle down. ((326 pp.))

THE CASTLE OF IRON, by L. Sprague deCamp and Fletcher Pratt (Gnome Press, 1950; \$2.50). The sequel to "The Incomplete Enchanter." Dr. Chalmers has been having himself some fun and finds his way into the world of Orlando's "Furioso." He somehow brings Shea's wife with him, causing trouble with the cops back home. Shea, two friends, and the cop, are all drawn into another world, and the fun begins. The book is graced with a jacket by Hannes Bok that is almost worth the price in itself. ((224 pp.))

—Mike Phillips

SILVERLOCK, by John Myers Myers (E. P. Dutton & Co., Inc., 1949; \$3.00). It has seemed strange to me that some of the best fantasies currently in print are so neglected by fantasy readers that dealers have stocks on hand to give away as free premiums, or to sell at bargain prices, thus steering customers (ever leery of "bargains" as probably being worth as little as their prices show) from them. WELL OF THE UNICORN, although originally well-received—no pun intended—has become such a book; another, in my opinion a much better book than the aforementioned, is SILVERLOCK. SILVERLOCK is the story of the adventurings of Clarence Shandon, called Silverlock, in the fabulous Commonwealth, a land apparently beyond time in that it contains within its boundaries people, places, and incidents from all periods of history, legend, and literature. Shipwrecked somewhere in the Atlantic, Shandon is cast onto the same piece of flotsam as a stranger from another ship, a man who calls himself Goliath, Widsith, Taliesin, Amergin, Orpheus, and a few other names. Together they land on an island in what Goliath calls the Archipelago—and from there on it's one close scrape after another as they encounter such varied individuals as Circe, Robin Hood, Beowulf, Don Quixote, Izaak Walton, Manon Lescaut, Semiramis, Sir Gawain and the Green Knight, Dante's Virgil and Goethe's Faust incarnated in one body, and sundry others, each one lending his or her bit of wit, wickedness, adventure, or danger to the story. Goliath turns out to be quite different than the reader's first glimpse of him would indicate, as does Silverlock, for that matter. This tale of a world-weary man who seeks a reason for living—and finds love, friendship, treachery, and high adventure, and finally goes through the trials of the Pit to gain his destiny—is one no one can soon forget. There is in this book "meaningful commentary on man's search for a satisfying vision of life;" there are wit and erudition; but most important of all there is plain, unmarred good reading! If you don't read this book, of course, you'll never know what you missed. However, if you do read it, you'll be glad of having done so, and you'll pity the people who haven't! ((349))

—Bob Briney

WHAT THE CAT DRAGGED IN

All correspondence to this column should be addressed c/o Letter Editor, Robert E. Briney, 561 West Western Avenue, Muskegon, Michigan. No letter should exceed 250 words in length.

Dear Editor: In the March issue the DORMITORY OF THE DEAD story was good—a bit confusing to the reader most of the way, but then the situation was to Don, of course. Still, I like to know what the hero is trying to do, and I couldn't tell here. SHADOWS IN THE FOG was more poetical—more fantasy and less stf is my dish. The poetry was good.—James E. Warren, Jr., 881 Myrtle St., NE, Atlanta, Georgia.

Dear Bob: Enthusiasm has impelled me to quit work on my colossal three-million word novel /For FAN-FARE, of course?—Ed./ just long enough to give a few cheers for F-F. I've always thought the mag to be a leader in the fanzine field, and this issue has conclusively proved my claim. ### Rating is very difficult this month, but I think IT'S ALIE! is just the faintest shade better than anything else in the issue. Such sweet, innocent, child-like phrases as "None of your Goddam business!" fractured me, especially since the writer is a lady—apparently one who took a day off from being one while writing the article. Hilarious from start to finish, and definitely well written. ### Second, I guess, is EXPERIMENT. Its cosmic sweep and tremendous galactic vistas would make it worthy of the prozines—were it about thirty thousand words longer. Gad, Eugene, you can't cram such an imagination into the narrow confines of a short story! ### Show money in this month's F-F handicap goes to TWO LETTERS, G. Wetzel up. H.P. Cheese-craft, indeed! Again I am fractured /F-F seems to be giving you a bad time of it, boy! What have you been doing—wrestling with it?—Ed./ but this little piece gives some food for thought...if HPL were around today, would his yarns be accepted? I doubt that present-day aSF would accept his classic AT THE MOUNTAINS OF MADNESS; and if Amazing were to print a yarn like THE COLOUR OUT OF SPACE her present readers wouldn't get past the first paragraph without consulting their dictionaries three or four times. /Food for thought, indeed. HPL even had a time of it selling his stories twenty years and more ago, before people caught onto his style, and rejects were not unknown to him. If he were just breaking into writing today without the background of appearances in WEIRD TALES, he would very likely have an even harder time than he had then.—Ed./ But this letter is not a dissertation on the condition of the present day fantasy field, so I'll get on to the next rating. ### Fourth place—and a close fourth it is—goes to Toby Duane for A SIRIUS MATTER. I like it, and only the slightest shade of preference separates it from first place. ### At the risk of making a mortal enemy, I was all set to lower my visor, couch my lance, and rip into Tom Covington with Korla-ish savagery...but I thought better of it. Maybe I'm just a thick-headed Irishman, but I could make neither head nor tail of PARADOX OF DREAMS. It was, however, well written, despite the fact that the plot was an esoteric mess. ### Poetry was all up to par, particularly Andy Duane's piece, and Mack Reynolds' epistle was interesting and informative. ### I notice that the Seller-Duane-one-hand-washes-the-other series is conspicuous by its absence in this issue. Why? /A very good reason—neither one has written another tale in the "series." There will be a tale by Andy Duane in an early issue, however.—Ed./ —Brian McNaughton, 198 Bergen Place, Red Bank, New Jersey.

Editor: No feline dragged me in! I rode him. Side saddle, of course. FAN-FARE's cover slays me. I tried staring at it upside down and sidewise. I even went so far as to take ten paces forward and wheel suddenly, hoping the gruesome creature would go away. No use. I refuse to believe it's a man. I saw a man once, and he didn't look like that. Before you send it to the Smithsonian, what is it? Animal, vegetable, or mineral? We refuse to answer on the grounds that it might eliminate us.--Ed.7 ## Because of my passion for poetry I always read the verses first. THE LONELY is beautiful. Andrew Duane has a real feeling for words. The finest poem F-F ever printed was Al Leverentz's ERROR, and I see by the March issue I am not alone in my opinion. Some issues back Andrew Duane had one DWELLERS IN THE VAULT which I thought so lovely, I memorized it before the magazine disappeared. I like my poetry to boast a clarion sound, to ring and sing and fairly shout with color; like Shelley's ODE TO THE WEST WIND and Swinburne's GARDEN OF PROSERPINE. I like to be stirred and saddened and caught up in the beauty and rhythm of the lines, for poetry can give meaning to the simplest things in creation. Amen! A poet's words, those.--Ed.7 ## Tom Covington's latest is his best yet. However one line of his story is keeping me awake nights. "Her soft, clean body was pressed against his snugly." What's a snugly? Obviously, there's a part of the male anatomy I haven't heard about. Mother, you've been holding out on me! ### Seriously, it's a pleasure to read FAN-FARE, and I concede wholeheartedly that Paul Ganley is Fandom's most conscientious editor.---Marie-Louise, D & H Avenues, Riverside, Pennsylvania. ((Whoops, that's Marie-Louise Share; sorry.))

Dear Paul: Recently a visitor to my house picked up my shelf full of prozines and fanzines. One of the prozines, pub by Avenue and Jones, a so called fantasy mag fenerally full of sociological and psychiatric trash, he frowned at after glancing at its pilky contents; he looked twice at the misleading cover astounded! Science Fiction? In the Tin Nail dept were a number of letters to the editor, Soupy, headed "Dear John" (and Soupy is one) which inclined my friend to think said mag was a pseudo confession-al. After a blistering argument I agreed with him that said mag (with its "Dear John" letters and sociological stories) was nothing but soap opera in a senso, or soup opera. ## Then he chanced upon FAN-FARE. Ye ghud! Knowing September Tramp will sue at the drop of a cap, my friend warned that my fun with H P CheeseKraft (der "K" belongsk) would bring the law upon me. He also seen Al Leverentz's letter in the March ish calling for more humor. There is something to be said for both meanings; "It's A Lie" was a bit coarse in spots, you know. ## By the way, some one named Edward is always commenting in your letter dept. Is Briney's middle name that? Wee monsoon.--Ed.7 He comments in quite a few pro & fan mags, I find, but gets no listing in the different staff listings; I always see Ed says so&so everywhere. I dare you to use this letter. Disrespectfully, George. ## P. S.: Siriusly, Rack Meynolds sums up my own ideas about most of your writers, especially (my idea) they is poor gramerians & spilers; igorivent piple always did irriate me. You rat you left out the best part of my Cheesekraft letters! ((George Wetzel, 5 Playfield Avenue, Dundalk 22, Md.

Dear Ed? Yed? Ye Edde? Paul? I've got one main complaint against an otherwise excellent issue—the ARTWORK!!! God damn, can't you get any good artists? The cover was about the most horrible example of poor drawing that I've ever seen. The illo for PARADOX OF DREAMS was next worse, with the one for A SIRIUS MATTER being only nauseating. All of them were poorly composed, childishly drawn; and the cover! Gawd, I don't pretend to be an artist, and even I can draw better than that. If I didn't know

what it was supposed to represent, I wouldn't ### It's A Lie! was about the best feature in the whole mag—tho it would have gone better in FANVARIETY. More like this, please. In the fiction, I'd say Tom's PARADOX OF DREAMS was about the best. Then A SIRIUS MATTER, followed closely by EXPERIMENT. If you had got a good artist for PARADOX, I would have enjoyed it even more, if possible. Real good stuff. ## Too much poetry, too many hyphens in the first two paragraphs of Tom's story; you should get a more readable "FAN-FARE" on the cover. Again, if I didn't know what it meant I never would.—John Davis, 931 East Navajo Road, Tucson, Arizona.

Dear Paul: Leading by light-centuries was Toby Duane's A SIRIUS MATTER. I have seen poorer stuff than this in the promags. Let us know when Toby turns pro...EXPERIMENT: interesting. Though it had nothing radically wrong with it, this is the best I can say. A PARADOX OF DREAMS: I was going to ask why this was written in the first place and printed in the second; but an incidental comment in it gave me an idea for a cute little story, so I shall consider its existence justified. ## I have two things to say about the article: UGH!, and how did it sneak into an s-f fanzine? ## Poetry: I liked THE LONELY by Andrew Duane, possibly because it reminded me of another story I want to write if I can ever get around to it. ### That was a darn good letter from Mack Reynolds in the Cat's column. Best story criticisms I've come across. Couldn't you get him to write you a regular article explaining what was right and what was wrong about the stories in the previous issue? [Well, Mack—could we?—Ed.] I think that not only the writers but the readers—who-would-be-writers would benefit from it. ## Glad to see Alice Bullock's made good; I expected her to, so it lets me feel smug.—Helen Soucy, 31 Clare Avenue, Port Colborne, Ontario.

Dear Cat: Y'know the difference between FAN-FARE and the rest of the fanzines? Single. In FAN-FARE the authors put more accent on the writing than on the plotting, while in the other fmz the accent is on plotting. F'rexample: this issue's EXPERIMENT. Some very good writing in spots, but it was drawn out. The description of the—well, let's call him the hero—hero's enlargement to the macrocosm was unnecessary, at least in the length used. When the end of the story came, the punch wasn't the same. The reader's interest was lost in the description so that the ending lost its punch. In shorter length, this probably would have been a darn good story. Tom Covington's PARADOX OF DREAMS had some very good writing too, but was a little fuzzy around the edges. A SIRIUS MATTER started out as a fairly good comedy, but somewhere this faded out. Good story. ### Best of the verse was THE SPACER'S SONG; second THE LONELY and third, WHEN IN ACCORD WITH NIGHT. ### IT'S A LIE! was very good piece of something, I don't know what. Good for a few chuckles, though. However, I wonder about her last statement... ### I'll be kind and refrain from mentioning the cover.--Terry Carr, 134 Cambridge St., San Francisco 12, California.

—Reb

H-mm, bet you thought that was all. Uh-uh. Due to our hurried attempts to scrape together a double issue in half the time, Bob didn't obtain all the letters. Omission of his address on the CAT last issue helped, too, I must blushinglly admit. So I step in. You remember me, dontcha? I edit this here abomination. First a note from DeWeese.

Dear Paul: Received F-F two days ago. Congratulations on making the A-List in SS. And the latest issue: cover lousy, Covington's tale, won-

derful (I love that sort of thing, a fantasy of after death. Wonderful!) and Marie-Louise's article, It's A Lie, just as good, in a different way of course. #### A SIRIUS MATTER. Didn't care for it too much. Largely a pretty fair professional style, I thought, but there were a few rough spots, which I think you can find if you read it through. Whole thing, though, resembled too closely the short stories so often used as filler in the old CF mags or any other mag whose main attraction is a long novel.--Eugene DeWeese, Rochester, Indiana.

Dear Paul: I got the last FAN-FARE and like the fiction pretty much. But, Paul, why oh why, did you have to print that crud called It's A Lie? My, shame on you! What was the point? I did not think it was funny and it certainly ruined an otherwise good mag. I am wondering what part of my Crusade to Clean up Fandom Drive that you're in sympathy with? Not the profanity; I can see that. I enjoyed Reynold's letter in your F-F. Interesting, but I used to have some good covers as far as artwork and mimeoing goes.--Russell K. Watkins, 203 Wampum, Louisville 9, Ky.

[/FAN-FARE is primarily a fiction magazine. In writing fiction, or articles that use fictional, semifictional, or fictionalized argument, you find necessity for realism. People do curse; use and abuse of sex does exist. To ignore it is foolish, especially if one is attempting to simulate reality. Shall we read of murder and decadence and the latest sex attack on one hand, and on the other criticize an article or piece of fiction for depicting, in part or in whole, this side of the human ledger. Don't you swear if you hit your thumb with a hammer? It's a psychological necessity; if you don't, you're building up an awful lot of neuroses—or engrams, if you prefer that term. I wouldn't like to be in the vicinity of the blow-up when it occurs. Sex or swearing for the purpose of sensationalism I deplore; for realism, I admit.]

Dear Paul: I'll never give you another good review in ODD if it makes the quality drop so suddenly and sharply. FAN-FARE vol 2 no 2 was the best single ish of a fanzine this year; vol2no 3 is maybe worse than ## ('\$&%_ [censored to permit continuance, unstrained, of reasonably amicable relations betwixt fanzine editors—Ed.] ### The whole mag is exceptionally neat. But the fiction seemed almost as if you were using up some old crud that had gotten accepted and you were wishing now that you had rejected it. ### EXPERIMENT STRUCK me as being characterless, overburdened with paradox, and with no sensible theme. Covington's thing was nicely written but as pointless as a hunk of experimental poetry. [Perhaps the experimental poets might disagree with your suggestion!---Ed.] I saw Marie-Louise and rejoiced, but gad, that thing of hers you printed was just a bunch of ramblings. And the SIRIUS MATTER, although nicely done, struck me as being much-ado-about-nothing. You would need about 6000 words to do this justice. ### I like the colored paper, and the poetry is all good. Suggestion... don't split up the letters that way, bunch them in one place. Everybody hates leafing through a magazine to find the rest of something you're reading. [A suggestion hereby undertaken.] What's all this about BLAGUE? Maybe I'll even order one. I'm seriously thinking of publishing one of my novelettes. Merwin read and liked it, but said it was too heavily fantasy and not enough science. It runs about 25,000 words and would make a nice pamphlet.—Marion Bradley, Box 431, Tahoka, Texas.

Das ist alles!